



I don't know if I can do this job. Maybe I'm too sensitive. It's incredibly painful looking at the mess, the litter, the bones and blood. One minute I'm outraged and disgusted, and in the next breath I'm sad and in tears. I get really frustrated. And more often than not, the ignorance, the unconsciousness and the cruelty makes me want to fall asleep - to close my eyes and turn off the feelings.

What if people don't listen to me? Can one person really make a difference? I feel powerless at times. Why can't I just chill in my Hollywood flat, listen to my ipod and drive an SUV--I don't have to go vegetarian and buy a Hybrid do I?

Thoughts from our Environmental Affairs Editor...

MFACED WITH THE REALITY THAT THIS JOB requires far more than a Gucci power-suit, a pretty face, cool friends and a great view. Certainly this job demands my commitment, education, and advocacy. Furthermore, it requires that I become part of the solution, not part of the problem. Indeed, I must use my voice and speak for the trees and animals that cannot talk. But most importantly, it requires my sensitivity – my fury and my tears. I must open my eyes, heart and mind – even when it hurts, especially when it hurts. This is my purpose and this is my promise.

What does the Environmental Affairs Editor do anyway? Well, right now I'm reading an article in Baja Life Issue IV, The Sea of Cortes – Wanted: Dead or Alive. I'm staring at a picture of a baby sea lion with monofilament netting wrapped tightly around its neck, knowing that with each passing day the infant will grow bigger, in time strangled to death. Tears stream down my face and my heart aches, but I read on.

Baja Life Issue XI, Eco-Watch: The opening paragraph reads, "At a traditional community feast, in a small fishing village in southern Baja California, a 310 lb. female East Pacific Green Turtle named Gata was served as the main course. This occurred despite the \$2,500 satellite transmitter that Gata was wearing to keep track of her whereabouts." "It's frustrating to have all your study animals eaten," says biologist and co-founder of Wildcoast, Dr. Wallace J. Nichols.

Now I'm livid. So I go for a hike to burn off the steam. And it's a fine call, as a herd of ravenous mountain goats inspire me to graze on. Upon my return, I finish the article, but not without a knot in the pit of my stomach. Maybe it's the photo of Gata's dismembered head hanging off the sharp blade of a bloody knife. Maybe it's the detail about turtles not breeding until they're over 20 years old, and that Gata was thought to be over 60 years old. I suppose it was a culmination of many sobering facts. And once again, I get emotional,



really emotional. I imagine what it must have been like for Gata to swim freely and gracefully in the cobalt waters of the Sea of Cortés for over six decades. Did she leave babies behind? Grandbabies, perhaps? For extinction's sake, I hope so. Lastly, I wonder what she felt in her final moments when she was violently snatched from the sea and slaughtered in celebration of a human holiday.

Don't get me wrong, I love holidays and fiestas. In fact, my thirtieth birthday is only a few weeks away and although turning thirty brings with it a hesitant departure from my twenties, all in all I'm cheerful. I'm grateful to be healthy, alive and doing what I love. But I must let in thoughts of Gata the Sea Turtle on my birthday. Moreover, I'll remind myself that commercial netters may have trawled the ocean blue, tangling the neck of a baby sea lion so that I might enjoy a birthday dinner of fish at a trendy restaurant.

In closing, I'd like to impart that my favorite aspect of birthdays is the enjoyment of giving and receiving gifts. With this, I invite the readers of Baja Life to give a gift of preservation and protection to the marine fauna of the Sea of Cortés. Through December of 2004, our publishing company, Baja Communications Group, will donate five percent of each order placed at our on-line bookstore at www.alegriabooks.com to Pro Peninsula to support Grupo Tortuguero. Pro Peninsula is an environmental organization created to protect and aid in the recovery of the endangered sea turtles of the eastern Pacific. For more information, call (619) 723-0700 or visit their website at www.propeninsula.org. And of course, always feel free to contact me personally at jennacavelle@bajalife.com with suggestions, questions and comments on how to make a positive difference.

–Jenna Cavelle



Join Baja California's Growing Grassroots Sea Turtle Conservation Movement

By Wallace J. Nichols and Rodrigo Rangel

FEW WOULD INSIST THAT LIFE IS EASY FOR SEA TURTLES. NATURAL PREDATORS — PLUS THE HOOKS, NETS, TRAWLS, MARINA DEVELOPMENTS AND BLACK MARKET FOR TURTLE MEAT AND EGGS — ARE A DEADLY COMBINATION THAT PUT THE TURTLES' SLOW, DELIBERATE EXISTENCE AT RISK.



However, the growing influence of the Baja California sea turtle conservation movement gives sea turtles an edge on survival. In its seventh year, the movement itself has taken a simple and deliberate approach to making the oceans safer and more productive. Led by an expanding network of working fishermen and community members, the basis of the effort is its strong, personal and trusted relationships between colleagues, families and friends.

Pro Peninsula, a U.S.-based organization dedicated to environmental preservation in Baja California, is excited to be involved in this effort as the new coordinating body of the Grupo Tortuguero de las Californias. Pro Peninsula, whose mission is to empower communities and organizations on the Baja California peninsula to protect and preserve their environment, is pleased to work with the Grupo Tortuguero de las Californias to see that the movement continues to mature and grow. "It's a natural fit for us to work with Grupo Tortuguero, as the network coincides with both our regional interests and our organization's mission," said Kama Dean, co-director of Pro Peninsula. "It's a great example of a successful grassroots conservation effort."

In 2005 we will be back in Loreto from January 28 through 30 to celebrate the 7th Annual Meeting of Grupo Tortuguero. This year the event's theme is "Sea Turtle Revolution!" ("Revolución Tortuguero!"). This meeting has grown from a small

gathering of 45 Baja residents who wanted to save sea turtles in 1999, to the region's premiere grassroots conservation meeting. The meeting will highlight members of our eight turtle monitoring stations who will present community reports and update us on the recovery status of sea turtles at historical poaching locations throughout the peninsula. Participants will also include environmental educators, media experts, and people like you who care about preventing the unnecessary killing of sea turtles for meat or as "by-catch" in fishing nets. Together, we are creating a powerful sea turtle protection community in Mexico! For more information about the Grupo Tortuguero de las Californias or to request information on the 2005 annual meeting, email kama@propeninsula.org or visit www.baja.seaturtle.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DR. WALLACE J. NICHOLS, PH.D., co-founded the Grupo Tortuguero de las Californias in 1998 and WILDCOAST in 1999. He is currently the Pacific Ocean region director at the Blue Ocean Institute and a Research Associate at the California Academy of Sciences. He lives in Davenport, Calif., and can be reached at jnichols@blueoceaninstitute.org.



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